

PRESS RELEASE

DRESS, FASHION AND TEXTILES



The McCord Museum Pays Tribute to Fashion Designer Jean-Claude Poitras

A major exhibition devoted to his creations and sources of inspiration opens October 24

Montreal, October 22, 2019 – From October 24, 2019, to April 26, 2020, the McCord Museum presents *Jean-Claude Poitras: Fashion and Inspiration*, devoted to the well-known designer who is an iconic figure in Quebec and Canadian ready-to-wear fashion. Produced in conjunction with the Musée de la civilisation, the exhibition is an opportunity to explore the designer’s unique world and discover his sources of inspiration.

Jean-Claude Poitras has created collections with a sensibility that he readily attributes to significant life experiences. His **childhood memories**, the glamour **of the movies and his muses**, not to mention his many **travels**, have always nourished his creativity. *Jean-Claude Poitras: Fashion and Inspiration* offers visitors a chance to meet the man behind the creator, who has dedicated his career to fashion over three decades, from the 1970s through to the 2000s.

Since childhood, Poitras has been fascinated by textures and textiles, their characteristics, movement, and colours. He was a solitary child with a keen interest in the creative arts, and his designs often have links with his childhood memories of family, the church and its rituals. He has also had a lifelong love affair with the cinema. Marilyn Monroe, Marlene Dietrich and Audrey Hepburn have nurtured his imagination, along with Jeanne Moreau, Anouk Aimée and other stars of classic Hollywood and French films. Many Quebec celebrities were clients of his, and some of them—including Lisette Lapointe, Mila Mulrone, Liza Frulla, Andrée Lachapelle, Louise Deschâtelets and Colette Chicoine, his undisputed muse—later became friends and ambassadors for his brand. The exhibition also takes visitors along with Poitras on his many travels, which have fuelled his imagination. His career took him all over the world—to Japan, Hong Kong, Italy, Africa and Southeast Asia—places that became sources of new fabrics, colours and prints.

Articles of clothing, accessories, sketches, photographs, personal objects, love letters, advertising and fashion show materials make up the 130 artefacts drawn from the collections of the McCord Museum and the Musée de la civilisation, and acquired from Poitras between 2001 and 2017.

“Jean-Claude Poitras is one of Quebec’s most celebrated and admired contemporary fashion designers. His creations have left an invaluable legacy in our collective imagination and inspired several generations of designers,” said Suzanne Sauvage, President and Chief Executive Officer of the McCord Museum. “As the history of fashion is a fundamental part of the McCord Museum’s mission, it was entirely fitting for us to pay tribute to this great man, who is one of our own, appreciated not just for his talent, but also for his personality.”

“For over 30 years, Jean-Claude Poitras has influenced Quebec fashion through his signature designs, exceptional know-how and intuitive, very sensitive, artistic approach. For him, fashion is an art form that is part of our lives and reflects who we are. It was therefore only natural that the two museums that hold in their collections a large part of his outstanding work should come together to present, in both Quebec City and Montreal, a showcase of his most beautiful creations,” said Stéphan La Roche, Executive Director of the Musée de la civilisation.

An award-winning designer

Poitras will turn 70 this year. After studying fashion design at the École des métiers commerciaux and graphic design at Studio Salette, he opened his first studio in Old Montreal in 1972 and embarked on a long career. His creations have garnered numerous awards, including the Fil d'Or de Monte-Carlo in 1989, and two Griffes d'Or in Quebec in 1991. He was named to the Order of Canada in 1995. In 1996 he was appointed a Knight of the Ordre national du Québec, then promoted to Officer in 2012. On October 11 this year, he received the Prix du Québec, the highest distinction awarded by the Gouvernement du Québec in science and culture, in the “land use, architecture and design” category, the first fashion designer to be acknowledged in that category.

“This year is a critical juncture for me, first because I’m moving into a new decade of my life, but also because this exhibition has given me an opportunity to assess my 30-year career as a fashion designer. I remember while I live. With hindsight, I now realize how little Quebec fashion was known a few years ago and how much progress we have made since then. I am very proud to have left my mark on this marvellous time for Quebec and to have dressed so many women and men with the passion that still drives me today,” said Poitras.

Events you won't want to miss

In conjunction with the exhibition, the McCord Museum is offering a full range of fashion-related cultural activities. On Wednesday, November 13, as part of the series ***Fashion at the Museum***, Dress to Kill magazine editor in chief and lecturer at the École supérieure de mode ESG UQAM Stéphane Le Duc will talk to Poitras about the high points of his career.

On Thursday, November 21, an ***After Hours at the McCord*** evening for young adults will give them a chance to tour the exhibition in a relaxed atmosphere and discover the environmentally responsible ***Slow Fashion*** movement.

On January 30, 2020, at 6 p.m., Poitras will present the documentary ***Jeanne Moreau, l'affranchie***, as part of the ***FIFA at the McCord Museum*** programming, in conjunction with the International Festival of Films on Art (FIFA).

On February 4 and 11, Poitras will be giving two talks on the history of fashion in Quebec since 1950 as part of ***Les Belles Soirées*** of the Université de Montréal. And last, on April 1, as part of the ***Fashion at the Museum*** series of talks, he and guest designers will discuss inspiration, collaboration and artistic influence.

All the details about the cultural activities being organized in connection with the exhibition can be found on the [Museum website](#).

McCord Museum, a museum of fashion

The McCord Museum holds the largest collection of Canadian garments and accessories. Its Dress, Fashion and Textiles collection consists of over 20,000 items made or worn in Canada over the past three centuries. The custodian of many examples of mid-20th-century high fashion by Montreal, Canadian and international designers and couturiers, the McCord preserves the heritage of the development of Montreal's apparel industry and retail clothing sector.

In the fall of 2019, the McCord Museum launched EncycloModeQc, a unique online reference tool providing access to over 500 entries documenting who's who in the Quebec fashion industry, from the 19th century to today.

About the McCord Museum

The McCord Museum is the museum of all Montrealers, a social history museum that celebrates life in Montreal, both past and present—its history, its people and its communities. Open to the city and the world, the Museum presents exciting exhibitions, educational programming and cultural activities that offer a contemporary perspective on history, engaging visitors from Montreal, Canada and beyond. It is home to over 1.5 million artefacts, comprising one of the largest historical collections in North America, organized into the following departments: Dress, Fashion and Textiles, Photography, Indigenous Cultures, Paintings, Prints and Drawings, Material Culture, and Textual Archives. McCord Museum: Our People, Our Stories.

The exhibition *Jean-Claude Poitras: Fashion and Inspiration* is a joint production of the Musée de la civilisation and the McCord Museum.

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Possibility of interviews with Jean-Claude Poitras, Suzanne Sauvage, President and Chief Executive Officer of the McCord Museum, and Alexis Walker, Curatorial Assistant, Dress, Fashion and Textiles.

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This exhibition was organized
jointly by the McCord Museum
and the Musée de la civilisation.

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DRESS KILL

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